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RR RUEHBZ RUEH DU RUEHJO RUEHMR RUEHRN  
DE RUEHTO #1015 3040934  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
R 300934Z OCT 08  
FM AMEMBASSY MAPUTO  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 9481  
INFO RUCNSAD/SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY  
RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA 0137  
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 0269

UNCLAS MAPUTO 001015

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [KHIV](#) [EAID](#) [MZ](#)

SUBJECT: EMBASSY-FUNDED SOAP OPERA TO TACKLE HIV/AIDS,  
OTHER HEALTH ISSUES

¶1. (U) SUMMARY: On October 15, the Charge participated in a signing ceremony to award a one-year, \$400,000 grant to Mozambican media giant SOICO. The grant is funded from the Embassy's PEFPAR Small Grants Program and will be used to produce 15 episodes of a soap opera with a 30-minute format focusing on health issues, including HIV/AIDS. The project represents the first major public/private partnership involving the Embassy and a major private media company in Mozambique and could serve as an example for future projects.  
END SUMMARY.

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INVESTING IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR  
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¶2. (U) The grant agreement with SOICO, the parent company of the largest independent media group in Mozambique, which includes the daily newspaper O Pais and the television station STV, should prove to be an important strategic partnership with one of the most influential private companies in the country. O Pais, formerly a weekly newspaper, became a daily earlier in October, and STV is now estimated to be the country's most watched television channel. The project falls under SOICO's wide-ranging social initiative "Mozambique in Action," which utilizes public relations to stimulate society into actively contributing to the country's growth and development. In this case, a focus on health, hygiene, and infectious diseases offers an opportunity to educate the public and motivate them to protect themselves and their loved ones.

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THE SOAP OPERA AS A TEACHING TOOL  
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¶3. (SBU) The soap opera, entitled "Life for Everyone," will initially produce 15 30-minute episodes (possibly expanding to 30 episodes). Episodes will focus on a specific health-related topic within a real-life Mozambican context, followed by a 30-minute discussion of the story to include audience and viewer participation. Such a format will allow viewers not only to learn from the story presented, but also to further engage and ask questions following the program. While TV is still not the primary source of media for most Mozambicans, coverage continues to expand, and the production team has future plans to transfer the soap opera stories into radio programs to reach a larger audience. Since signing the grant agreement, STV has worked closely with the Embassy to tailor the focus and content of the programs to ensure consistency with the USG message on HIV/AIDS and malaria.

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COMMENT: AN INNOVATIVE BLUEPRINT FOR THE FUTURE  
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¶4. (SBU) There are several reasons to believe the project will be successful. First, key members of the production team are Brazilian, and the team has produced Brazilian soap

operas (which are very popular in Mozambique) as well as the Mozambique segments of several Hollywood movies, including Blood Diamond. Such experience should help build the capacity of Mozambican producers. Indeed, the creativity of the proposal was a major factor in the decision to partner with SOICO. Second, the project hired a group of popular Mozambican theater actors, generally considered to be the best in the country. Finally, STV's willingness to confer regularly with us concerning the show's content should ensure that the USG message, particularly concerning HIV/AIDS, is clear. We also believe that partnering with a growing independent media giant will cement our ties with this important sector and lead to future opportunities for cooperation.

Chapman